

San Jacinto River Waste Pits – Water and Sediment

EPA Administrator Pruitt visited the site on September 15 and received a briefing from on-the-ground EPA personnel. Assessment activities continue and the responsible party continues to repair the areas of the armored cap damaged by Hurricane Harvey. EPA dive team was in the process of conducting underwater inspections of the cap. No final determination has been made by the dive team and their assessments are ongoing. Initial sampling data from Post-Hurricane Harvey condition of surface water and sediment at San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund site are consistent with historical site conditions that existed before the hurricane made landfall. EPA will continue to keep the public informed as assessments of the site continue.

On September 7, 2017, surface water and sediment samples were collected and analyzed for dioxins and furans to evaluate the potential effects from Hurricane Harvey. On September 11, a sample was also collected from the discolored material discovered on site. That sample was analyzed for semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs) and dioxins and furans.

Dioxins/Furans, reported as Dioxin Toxicity Equivalents (TEQ), were detected in sediment and discolored material samples within the range of background concentrations in the San Jacinto River. SVOCs were not detected in the discolored material. Dioxin TEQ in surface water samples were comparable to levels observed before the hurricane made landfall.

The Site is located in Channelview, Harris County, Texas. It consists of a set of impoundments built in the mid-1960s for the disposal of pulp and paper mill wastes. The northern set of impoundments, approximately 14 acres in size, are located on the western bank of the San Jacinto River, north of the I-10 Bridge over the San Jacinto River. These northern impoundments are partially submerged in the river as a result of land subsidence in the area caused by groundwater withdrawal. The southern impoundment, less than 20 acres in size, is located on a small peninsula that extends south of I-10.

The site was placed on the National Priorities List on March 19, 2008. Site contaminants of potential concern (COPCs) include dioxins and furans. A removal action was conducted from December 2010 through July 2011 that consisted of the construction of a temporary armored cap over the northern impoundments by the Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs) under EPA oversight. The site is in the characterization phase; no remedy selection has been made.

Future site evaluations will occur during remedial actions and subsequent Superfund Five-Year Review. EPA is responsible for reviewing Superfund remedial actions at least every five years where hazardous substances, pollutants or contaminants will remain on site above levels that allow for unlimited use and unrestricted exposure. CERCLA also requires that EPA report to Congress regarding these sites. A Superfund Five-Year Review Report to Congress is prepared each fiscal year.